
Senator Edith Prague
Representative Joseph Serra

Co-Chairs Joint Committee on Aging
Connecticut Legislative Assembly
State House Room 011
Hartford, Ct 06106

Dear Senator Prague, Representative Serra and the Committee Members on Aging

I wanted to take a brief moment to share with you some personal reflections on the Testimony heard today, February 24, 2011 on House Bill 6348 – An Act Concerning Grandparent's Rights.

I am one of those grandparents who has had to by family circumstances, step back into the role of caring for my two grandsons, Zachary, age 3 ½ and Jaccob, age 2 /12. The journey of how I got to this point is complicated and probably not particularly relevant to what I would like to discuss but the impact of that family decision has had a profound impact on not only myself but all my other family responsibilities.

I can speak directly to the testimony provided by the representative from Generations. In order to make the adjustments to accommodate my new expanded family obligations I was forced to leave my original profession as a pastor in a local church, relocate to a new town, find housing at tremendously higher cost and exhaust thousands of dollars of my "nest egg" I had saved for my eventual retirement. All this occurred while I was supporting my daughter through a difficult divorce with domestic violence involved and an ongoing DCF investigation.

As a result of my taking on the responsibilities of caring for my grandsons, the DCF investigation of potential child neglect was ended and they eventually "cleared" my daughter of the allegations of child-neglect. They closed her case, but I was told that the only reason they did so was due to the fact that the grandchildren were going to be in my household and under my supervision and care.

By closing the case on my daughter DCF was able to avoid the costly provision of foster care for my two grandsons. They also avoided providing the on-going support and counseling that my daughter still desperately needs after being mentally and physically abused by her former

husband. They never once asked if I would be able to sustain the housing, assistance and support over the long term and they never once suggested that we might be able to obtain even a minute amount of support to help me defray the costs I have incurred in stepping in to care for my loved ones in their time of trial. The former husband has been arrested for non-payment of support on behalf of 2 other families he has left behind and is currently awaiting trial for several felonies related to the domestic violence, there is no child-support coming from him and never will be.

My story is not unique. While serving as Pastor in Putnam my local church we had families where the grandparents had sole custody of multiple children and several families where intergenerational living became the order of the day when young adult parents became unemployed. I even sponsored a small support group for grandparents in our town in similar circumstances and at one point there were 10 sets of those grandparents participating in the group.

In my new position as Outreach Coordinator for the Senate Democratic Office, reaching out to faith communities and leaders across the state the concerns of these intergenerational families and grandparents providing kinship care for their loved ones has been raised again and again. In recent conversations with faith based leaders and their congregants that I have hosted in three different districts, kinship care was raised in all three of the meetings. From rural North East Connecticut, to New Haven and Bridgeport there are hundreds of grandparents now providing kinship care for their grandchildren, some with and many without the presence of the children's biological parents.

I urge the Aging Committee to support House Bill 6348 and consider adopting additional language that would direct the Department of Social Services and the Department of Children and Families to do further research on how best to resource grandparents who have stepped back into the role of providing shelter, the necessities of life as well as their love and support for their extended families when doing so has put their own well-being and long-term viability at risk.

Thank You for Your time and I will continue to follow this issue on behalf of the faith communities all across the state of Connecticut.

Rev. David H. Baird
Outreach Coordinator
Senate Democratic Office &
Deputy Chaplain to the Senate

State Capital Building, Room 011
Hartford, CT 06106
Office: 860-240-8621
Cell: 860-465-6414